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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000226

SIPDIS

EUR FOR DAS JONES & DAS GARBER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SI](#) [EUC](#) [HR](#)
SUBJECT: SANADER POSITIVE ABOUT REHN PROPOSAL

REF: A. ZAGREB 00215
[1](#)B. ZAGREB 00218

Classified By: Robert A. Bradtke, Ambassador, for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)
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[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Building on previous meetings with Foreign Minister Jandrokovic and President Mesic (see reftels), Ambassador met today (April 28) with Prime Minister Sanader to urge a "positive and rapid" response to the latest version of the Rehn proposal. Sanader agreed, saying that he is "very positive" about the Rehn proposal: "we are on the same track." Sanader added that he and Mesic will consult with parliamentary leaders next Tuesday (May 5), followed by Croatia's formal response to Rehn. Sanader, like Jandrokovic and Mesic, expressed concern about the "contact with international waters" point, but indicated that this issue would not stand in the way of Croatian acceptance of the proposal, which he described as a good solution for both sides. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Following previous meetings with Foreign Minister Jandrokovic and President Mesic to urge Croatia's acceptance of the Rehn proposal, the Ambassador, accompanied by DCM, sat down April 28 with Prime Minister Sanader to discuss the latest version of the Rehn proposal to arbitrate the Croatian-Slovenian border dispute and unblock Croatian accession talks. He began by emphasizing the U.S. view that bilateral disputes should not be used to impede Euro-Atlantic integration. Acknowledging that only Croatia could decide whether the current proposal is in its best interest, the Ambassador nevertheless urged a "positive and rapid" response, adding that the proposal contains important elements of international law, as Croatia had requested. The Ambassador also said that the proposal would lead to the unblocking of Croatia's EU accession talks. Finally, the Ambassador noted that acceptance of this proposal would improve the increasingly acrimonious bilateral relationship between Croatia and Slovenia.

[1](#)3. (C) Sanader responded by thanking Washington for its continued engagement on this issue in support of Euro-Atlantic interests and then stated that he had a "very positive view" of the Rehn proposal. He noted that he and President Mesic would be meeting with parliamentary leaders next Tuesday (May 5) to discuss the proposal before forwarding a formal response to Rehn. Like Jandrokovic and Mesic before him, Sanader expressed concern about the ambiguous implications of the Slovenian "contact with international waters" point. The Ambassador noted that the lack of clarity might well be purposeful and does invite some risk, but added that the ambiguity might well make it possible for Slovenia to accept this proposal without losing face with its public. Moreover, the Ambassador added, if Croatia is confident of its position under international law, then this is a risk well worth taking.

[1](#)4. (C) Sanader commented that this issue would not stand in the way of the proposal, which he characterized as being good

for both sides. He added that four out of six Croatian legal experts asked to examine the proposal had given it a favorable review. Finally, he indicated his intention to give Slovenian Prime Minister Pahor a little room to accept the proposal with grace, agreeing with the Ambassador that the proposal should be viewed as a mutually beneficial solution rather than a triumph for Croatia.

15. (C) Comment: Sanader went farther than Jandrokovic or Mesic in his positive assessment of the Rehn proposal. While there is still some possibility that Croatia may seek a change in the language relating to Slovene contact with international waters, Sanader seemed to recognize that it is time for Croatia to say "yes" to Rehn.
BRADTKE